

Property Tax Administration

Mission

To ensure an equitable and uniform application of the property tax laws as administered by local officials. This includes hearing appeals from local property tax boards of appeal (PTABOA).

Summary of Activities

The **Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF)** and the **Indiana Board of Tax Review (IBTR)** are charged with property tax administration in Indiana.

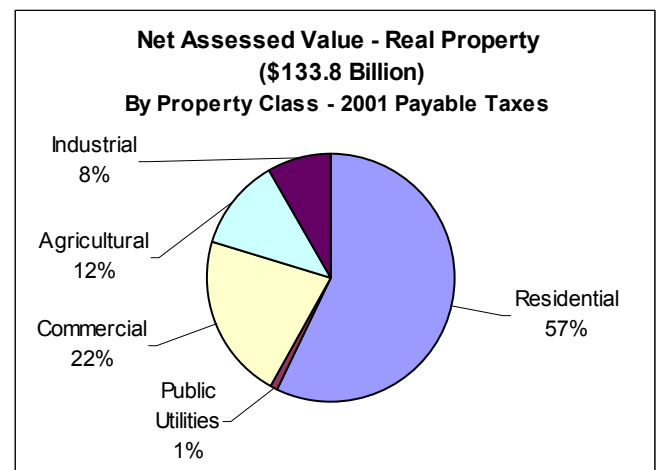
The DLGF interprets and provides guidance on the property tax laws to all of the local assessing officials in the state. The DLGF assessment division provides and oversees training in assessment practices and certifies assessing officials, tax representatives, contractors, and professional appraisers. The assessment division oversees and provides technical assistance to local officials in the reassessment process and reviews the equalization studies each county assessor is required to perform during the reassessment. In addition, the assessment division is directly responsible for assessing utility distributable property and certain large industrial facilities and conducts personal property audits and reviews exemption decisions made at the local level. The agency staff works with all levels of local assessing officials, making regular visits to local offices to answer questions and provide assistance.

The DLGF operations division monitors and supervises the assessment software programs that counties use to perform mass appraisal throughout the state in order to ensure that these systems are capable of generating values compliant with the state standards.

The DLGF has the statutory responsibility to reassess Lake County and to handle all appeals from the reassessment directly. The DLGF has contracted with Cole Layer Trumble, Manatron, and Crowe Chizek to perform this work. DLGF staffs make regular visits to Lake County to monitor and direct performance of the reassessment process.

The DLGF conducts ongoing research and analysis in all areas of property taxation to ensure that the distribution of the property tax burden is uniform and equitable. The DLGF, in conjunction with the Indiana Fiscal Policy Institute, is performing an independent equalization study of the 2002 reassessment.

The IBTR adjudicates real property, personal property and exemption appeals received from the county PTABOAs. County auditor decisions concerning Enterprise Zone Inventory Credits are also appealed to the Board, as are original assessments by county assessors and PTABOAs. In addition, the agency adjudicates direct appeals from DLGF assessments and reviews, including appeals concerning personal property audits and assessments of distributable property and large industrial facilities. The IBTR also has additional responsibilities during the 2002 reassessment because of the independent reassessment of Lake County. The agency is hearing Lake County appeals directly since the Lake County Assessor and PTABOA have been removed from the reassessment process.



External Factors

The most significant external factors affecting property tax administration are the completion of the 2002 reassessment by local officials, the subsequent independent analysis of its results, and the anticipated volume and complexity of taxpayer appeals. A map depicting the ongoing progress of the assessment is available on-line at http://www.in.gov/dlgf/news/reassess_map.pdf.

Evaluation and Accomplishments

The DLGF finalized several rules during this biennium, an essential first step towards meeting the 2002 reassessment schedule and defining the process necessary to validate the reassessment once it is completed. In the meantime, the agency conducts periodic surveys of county assessors to determine reassessment progress and identify potential problem areas. In Lake County, DLGF's direct oversight activities have ensured that the project proceeds on schedule. The agency continues to be an important resource in training local assessors, especially important during this reassessment because of changes in assessment methodology. With regular visits to local assessor offices, we also provide a significant amount of one-on-one guidance.

The IBTR has eliminated the backlog of cases that has traditionally plagued the agency. The Board has also developed procedures and practices to comply with their more judicial role in the property tax appeal process and made all decisions issued since January 2002 available on-line. Staff training has been enhanced and strategies and revised administrative rules have been developed to improve the agency's ability to process and resolve the increased number of petitions anticipated from the 2002 reassessment.

Plans for the Biennium

The DLGF plans to address general needs that result from the changes in the property tax system and/or legislative mandates. This includes continuing to improve the level of technical assistance and training for local officials, developing/updating rules that guide the assessment process, and improving data capture, processing, and retrieval.

The IBTR's objective is to fully and fairly resolve all property tax appeals within the allotted statutory time frames. The agency will offer several procedures designed to expedite hearings and the issuance of its determinations, including a small claims process, alternative dispute resolution options, and "paper" hearings.

